



Office of Insular Affairs
www.doi.gov/oia

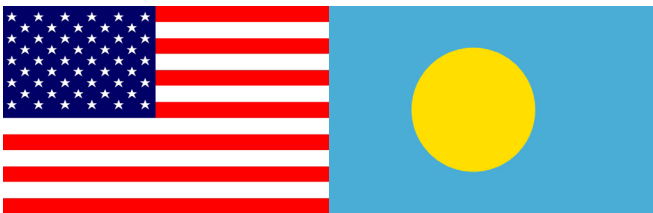


U.S. Department of the Interior

INSULAR AREA HIGHLIGHTS

January 18, 2012, Volume 1, Issue 1

U.S. REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO PALAU



January 3, 2012—The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2012, signed into law by President Obama on December 23, 2011, includes continued funding for the Republic of Palau. Palau will receive \$13,147,000 in fiscal year 2012 for its government operations.

“The appropriation demonstrates the continuing commitment of the United States to Palau and our relationship under the Compact of Free Association,” said Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Anthony M. Babauta. “Although we would prefer that Congress enact S 343 approving the results of the fifteen-year Compact review, our commitment is firm. The 2012 appropriation continues financial assistance to Palau at the same level it received in 2009, the last year of funding under our first agreement.”

United States Ambassador to Palau Helen Reed-Rowe stated, “Palau is a strong ally and we welcome this good news.”

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

OIA Grants to Insular Areas

2

RMI Names New
President and Cabinet

First Palauan to Join U.S.
Armed Forces

GCC Opens Student Center
With Federal Support

3

Guam Granted Russian
Parole Authority

Funding For Salt
River Bay MREC

Interagency Group on
Insular Areas to Meet

4

USCIS Clarifies
Employment Guidelines

Census Releases
Population Counts



ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S WELCOME

Welcome to this first edition of Insular Highlights, a quarterly electronic newsletter by the Office on Insular Affairs (OIA) capturing successes and ongoing challenges confronting US Territories and Freely Associated States. There is a great amount of ongoing collaboration between island leaders (public and private sectors), Members of Congress and OIA to improve the quality of life for all who call our islands home. It is my hope that by highlighting our achievements, collectively and individually, there is a broader understanding throughout the Caribbean and the Pacific of our progress towards empowering insular communities.

OIA GRANTS TO INSULAR AREAS IN 2011 TRANSLATE INTO \$1.5B OF GDP

(January 2012) - The Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) has released an analysis prepared for the Office of the Secretary of the Interior indicating that OIA grants and programs contributed \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2011 to the GDP of the seven insular areas OIA works with. More specifically, OIA federal grant payments of \$428.6 million in FY11 supported 31,364 jobs (16 percent of all jobs) in all seven areas, generated total employee compensation (wages and salaries and benefits) of \$541.5 million and contributed \$1.5 billion in GDP.

Economic Impacts Attributable to FY 2011 Federal Grants and Payments to Seven Insular Areas

December 2011

Final Report

Prepared for
Office of Insular Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Prepared by
Alan C. O'Connor
Sara Casey
RTI International
3040 Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

[HTTP://WWW.DOI.GOV/OIA/REPORTS/OIAECONOMICREPORTS.HTML](http://www.doi.gov/oia/reports/oiaeconomicreports.html)

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW RMI PRESIDENT AND CABINET



On Tuesday, January 17, 2012, the Marshall Islands Nitijela inaugurated Ailinglaplap Senator Christopher Jorebon Loeak as the nation's sixth President at the opening of the Nitijela (Marshall Islands Parliament).

H.E. President of the Marshall Islands, Christopher Jorebon Loeak

Palau President Johnson Toribiong and Federated States of Micronesia President Manny Mori attended the ceremony in Majuro this week, as well as representatives of state governments in the FSM, Guam and the Northern Marianas. U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands Martha Campbell and Interior Department Assistant Secretary Tony Babauta were also present.

(Source Marshall Islands Journal)

FIRST PALAUAN TO JOIN U.S. ARMED FORCES HONORED

(December 2011) The first Palauan national to join the U.S. Armed Forces in 1954, retired Army SFC Francisco Masato Kumangai, passed away in Koror, Palau in December 2011. During his career in the U.S. Army, he served in the Korean and Vietnam wars. Of Mr. Kumangai's seven children, five followed his example and joined the U.S. Armed Forces: one graduated from West Point, two graduated from the Naval Academy, one from Citadel, one served in the Air Force and one is still in active duty in the Army Reserve. Approximately 500 Paluans currently serve in the U.S. Armed Forces – five have been killed while on active duty since 9/11. The funeral was held on Peleliu on December 11, 2011 and was attended by numerous U.S. government officials including U.S. Ambassador to Palau Helen Reed-Rowe, the U.S. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, who delivered a condolence letter from Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Major General Benny Paulino, Adjutant General of the Guam National Guard who came with the Honor Guard from Guam to honor the deceased. (Source: U.S. Embassy Koror)



GCC OPENS STUDENT CENTER WITH FEDERAL SUPPORT



Photos by Mike Santos

This past December Assistant Secretary Babauta was on hand to assist President Mary Okada open the new Student Center for Guam Community College. Construction of the \$4.3 million Student Center was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act with the Office of Insular Affairs providing additional funding for “green” furniture and collateral equipment for the center. Solar panels for the Center were also installed using ARRA funding provided by the Guam Energy Office. “We consider it a real accomplishment to be able to offer our students a second state-of-the-art facility in which to study and learn the skills and training prerequisite to being a strong and viable part of our workforce,” said GCC President Okada. GCC has also built a LEED-certified Learning Resource Center. The new Center houses classrooms and testing rooms for Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, English as a second language, and Criminal Justice. The building also includes the college bookstore and a café for students.

GUAM GRANTED RUSSIAN PAROLE AUTHORITY



Last December, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security granted visa parole authority for Russian visitors to come to Guam, allowing Russian tourists to enter the island on a case-by-case basis for up to 45 days, without the need for a visa. The announcement was welcome news to trade industry leaders who have been pursuing a full visa waiver for both Chinese and Russian visitors. Guam’s leadership say they have much to gain from a visa waiver program. A conservative projection is US\$144.5 million (in 2011 dollars) in additional net annual revenues to the government of Guam in the year 2020. China alone would account for US\$138.5 million of that increase, a 21 percent increase in Guam’s total annual revenues. “The Russia visa waiver parole is a step in the right direction, but

all stakeholders are still pushing for the China visa waiver, which will have an enormous impact on the local economy,” said GVB General Manager Joann Camacho. Toward the end of 2011, Guam had received 6,375 Chinese visitors, a 50.2 percent increase over 2010. Source: VisitGuam.Org

FUNDING FOR SALT RIVER BAY MREC

In the fall of 2011, OIA awarded \$2.6 million to the National Park Service to (NPS) to continue the design and development of the Salt River Bay Marine Research and Education Center (MREC) at the Salt River Bay National Heritage Park and Ecological Preserve (SARI), a unit of NPS on St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands (USVI).

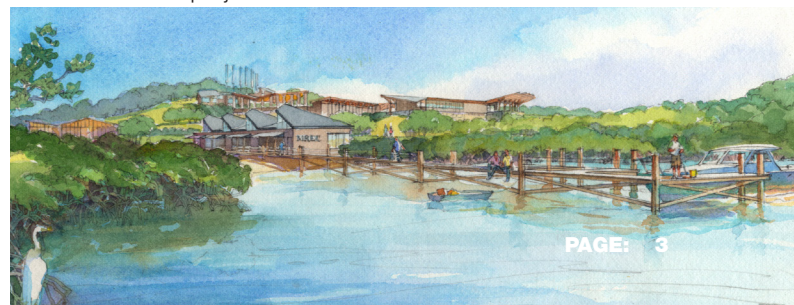
The OIA grant will support completion of schematic architectural and engineering design and enable NPS to hire an education and research coordinator who will develop local educational and research programs related to the MREC. The coordinator will work closely with the faculty at UVI to develop K-12 study plans and educate the public about threats to the islands’ ecology. It will also support the first major research project on bioluminescence at Salt River Bay.

The MREC is a partnership among NPS and OIA, both units of the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Joint Institute of Caribbean Marine Studies (JICMS) and the Government of the Virgin Islands. The JICMS is a consortium of four universities -- University of North Carolina Wilmington; University of the Virgin Islands; Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; and University of South Carolina -- that have worked together since 1999 to develop the MREC on St. Croix.

The MREC will be located on Hemer’s Peninsula adjacent to Salt River Bay on St. Croix’s north central coast. The proposed facility will include wet laboratories, classrooms and lecture spaces, dock and diving operations, a museum collection/archive annex, living accommodations, and related support facilities. The project’s sustainability goals include net zero standards for power generation, water collection and wastewater treatment, LEED Platinum status and certification through the Living Building Challenge.

The MREC campus will occupy about eight acres of the Hemer’s Peninsula site, which was heavily disturbed during the 1960s and 1970s when a hotel and marina project was partially developed and then abandoned. The campus is planned to house 48 undergraduate students and 12 researchers/graduate students. The program also includes 12 lab modules to support marine science research projects.

Rendering of MREC dock by Lord Aeck & Sargent, (LAS) an architectural firm based in Atlanta. LAS provided the architectural plan for the MREC facility.



IGIA TO MEET IN FEBRUARY 2012

The Annual Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) as established under Presidential Executive Order 13537, will be convening on Tuesday, February 28, 2012 in Washington, D.C.

Also scheduled in conjunction with the 2012 Plenary Session will be workshops provided by Commerce's Economic Development Administration for Territorial officials on Wednesday, February 29, to provide assistance with completing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs). A second workshop will be provided on the President's Business USA Initiative which aims to make it easier for America's small businesses to access Federal services, grow and hire.



U.S. CENSUS RELEASES SUPPLEMENTAL POPULATION COUNTS FOR ISLAND AREAS

(January 12, 2012) Supplemental population counts for lower levels of geography have now been made available for American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands at the village level. The demographic profiles for the Island Areas are scheduled for release this summer, and the summary files are scheduled for release in the fall.

The supplemental population counts and other information about the Island Areas can be found on the Census website at:

<http://2010.census.gov/news/press-kits/island-areas/island-areas.html>

The Secretary of the Interior has administrative responsibility for coordinating federal policy in the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the responsibility to administer and oversee U.S. Federal assistance provided to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Office of Insular Affairs under the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas executes these responsibilities on behalf of the Secretary.



In November of 2011, Assistant Secretary Babauta joins the Presidents of the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau in a meeting between Pacific Leadership and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

DHS USCIS CLARIFIES EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

(November 2011) The USCIS has issued specific Form I-9 Guidelines for U.S. employers who hire individuals from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau (November 29, 2011) and also provided guidelines Employers Hiring Individuals in the Northern Mariana Islands (November 22, 2011).

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=a9825565d1be3310VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=ad3e1921c6898210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD>

OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
1849 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20240
Phone: (202) 208-4736 | www.doi.gov/oia

